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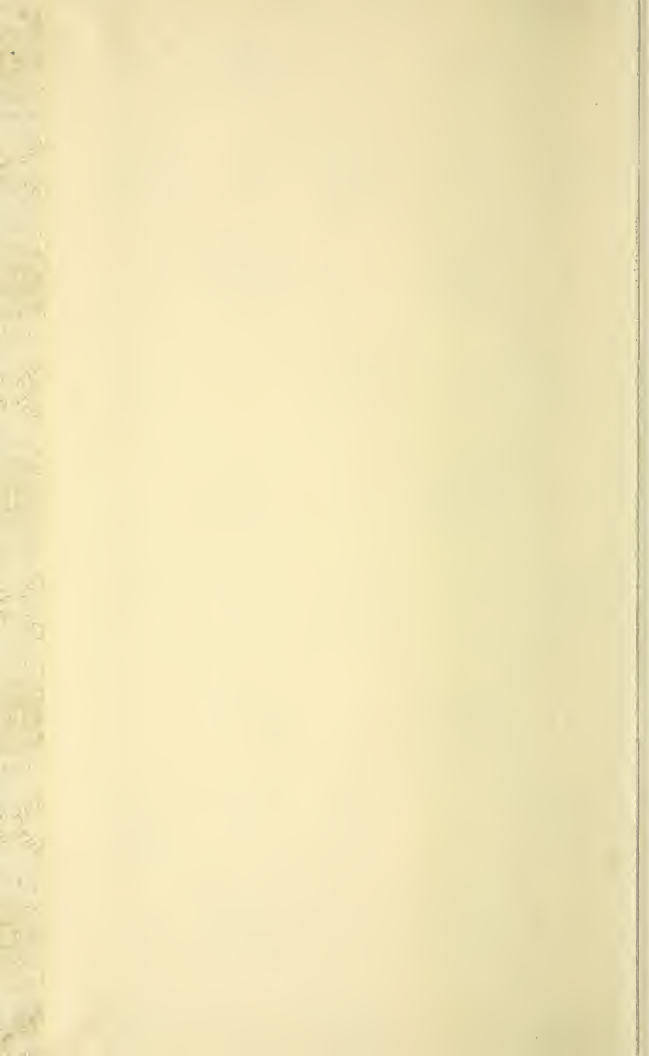
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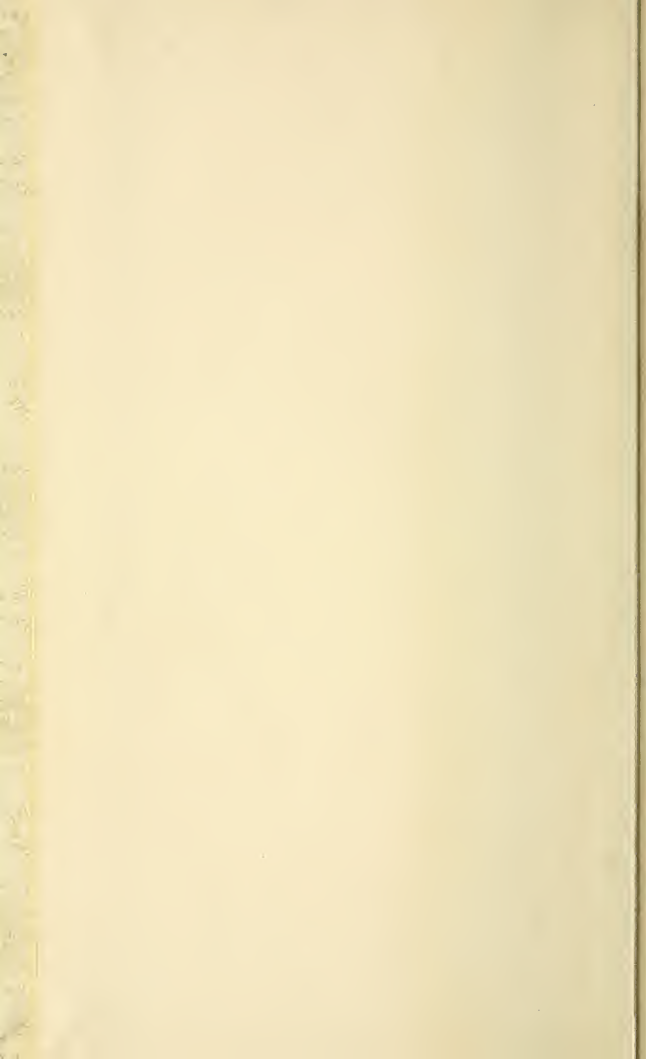
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1824









THE
Recollections

OF

JOTHAM ANDERSON,

Minister of the Gospel.

Henry Ware.

I have been young, and now am old.

O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.

✓
BOSTON:



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DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, TO WIT:

District Clerk's office.

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the eighth day of March A. D. 1824, in the forty eighth year of the independence of the United States of America, DAVID REED of the said District, has deposited in this office the title of a book the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

"The Recollections of Jotham Anderson, Minister of the Gospel.

I have been young, and now am old.

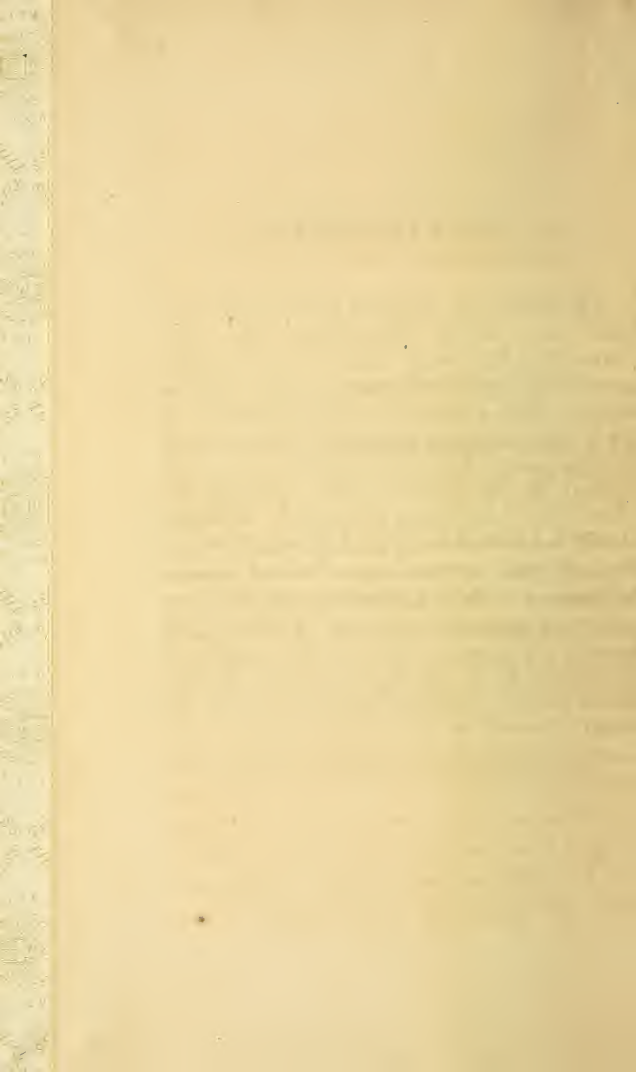
O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."

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JNO. W. DAVIS, *Clerk of the District
of Massachusetts.*

ADVERTISEMENT.

The following chapters are republished, with very slight alterations, from the CHRISTIAN REGISTER, where they had appeared as they were written from week to week. The author has been gratified to learn that they are thought to be of good tendency, and has consented that they shall appear in the present form, although his plan is far from being completed. Whether it will be carried on to a completion or not, depends upon circumstances which cannot be foreseen. In the mean time it will be a subject of grateful rejoicing to him, if his humble fragment shall be the means of doing any thing for that personal religion, which is the first and greatest concern of man.



RECOLLECTIONS, &c.

CHAPTER I.

I HAVE lived long enough in the world to exhaust all its pleasures, and to be more than wearied with its cares. Like other old men, I look back, upon a life of mingled joy and sorrow, light and darkness, and take an equally melancholy satisfaction in the remembrance of each. There is one light, as I look back, which I see shining every where; brighter than the sun of my prosperity, and casting the rainbow of peace on every cloud of my adversity—and that is the light of God's love. I cannot remember the hour when I have seen it hidden. O, that I had always honoured and loved it as became his child!—And even now, when the infirmities of age are stealing

upon me, and to the outward eye of man nothing remains for me but toil and sorrow—even now, that love is not withdrawn. It has lighted up, as I may say, a torch of hope, which dissipates all the present clouds of earth, and scatters the thick darkness of the valley of the shadow of death. He who was the guide of my youth, is the strength of my age. He who was my sun at the noon of life, is my shield at its close.—Why should I fear for the future, when the past, though chequered with ill, is yet one continued testimony of divine faithfulness?

Methinks, as I draw near the tomb, I am as much tranquilized and gladdened by my remembrance of the past, as by my hope of the future. And why should I not be? For my faith in the promises is always the clearer and brighter, when I think of my experience of past faithfulness; and my hope is never so steadfast, as when it is supported upon the arm of memory. It is when I reflect on the joy and peace of days gone by, that I feel most able to trust those which are coming. It is then, that

*Religion bears my spirits up,
And I enjoy a blessed hope,*

I cannot remember the time when I had not a sense of religion, and a fear of God; and I have no doubt that it is owing to my early and habitual impressions, which became interwoven in my soul, as a part of its very fabric, or constitution, that I have enjoyed such quietness and steadfastness throughout a long pilgrimage. Little do parents consider, while they are forming their infants' hearts and characters upon other principles, and teaching them to act by other motives, how difficult they render a subjection to religious motives afterward, and how they subtract from the sum of their religious enjoyment! Were all mothers like mine, how greatly would the obedience of the young christian's pilgrimage be facilitated, and its peace ensured!—I love to dwell on the memory of that honoured woman. My earliest recollection of her is in the act teaching me to pray,—when she every evening took me on her knees, and clasping my little hands, made me repeat after her my childish petitions. Methinks I still see the beautiful expression of her maternal eye, and feel the kiss, full of

affection and piety, with which she closed the service. At such times, she would explain to me the purposes of prayer, and teach me to love the good Being, who gave me father and mother, and made me happy. It was her practice also, to seize the moments when my young heart was overflowing with cheerfulness and good will, to remind me of the Father above, and direct my gratitude to him. Thus his image became associated in my thoughts, with all that was gladsome and delightful ; with every satisfaction and every enjoyment. It was mingled with all my remembrances of maternal fondness ; and the love of God grew upon the same branch with the love of my parents. I sought to please him, I feared to offend him, I loved to speak of him, and to him, in the innocent openness of my young heart, and to regard him, in all respects, as I did my parents. Thus there was nothing of severity, or gloom, or dread, in my early religious feelings. I knew nothing of the dislike of religion, which I have seen in many others. The judicious piety of my parents, made it a de-

light to me and not a burden. I saw it mixing with all their thoughts and pursuits, most evidently the ingredient of life which did most to make them happy ; never casting a gloom over them, never arraying them in sternness, nor driving away innocent pleasures ;—and thus it found its way to my heart, and (blessed be He who has supported me) has never left my heart, or ceased to be its joy and peace. I have much inconsistency to be ashamed of, and many sins to lament ; but, thanks to my pious parents, and the grace of God, I have never failed to find religion a pleasure, and never withdrawn from my father's God.

O that parents would but take a hint of wisdom from this, and treat the young immortals committed to them, as if they were indeed immortal !—*I have no children.*—It hath not pleased my Father that I shall leave my name behind me. I cannot, therefore, repay to my own offspring, the debt which I owe to my parents ; I can only intreat others to do it. And I do most earnestly solicit them to drive austerity from their religious teachings, and to make the idea of

God not only one of the earliest, but one of the *happiest* of the infant mind. Let it be presented, not rarely, with ceremony, and on occasions of sadness and alarm—as if a fearful object of dread, which shuns all that is happy ; but let it be a familiar thought, beloved, because always connected with happiness, and to be feared only by those who do wrong.

Thus passed the years of my childhood—happier were never known. I was made early familiar with the history and truths of revealed religion, and taught to act every day from a regard to them before any other motive. My parents were very seldom known to employ other motives with their children than those of religion. And the consequence was, I was always made to inquire, *Is it right? Will it please God? Would Jesus approve this? Is this doing as I would be done by?*—till such questions formed the standard of my conduct, just as *What will people think? Is this genteel? Is this for my interest?* are the inquiries which decide the men of the world. They referred me, on all occasions, to the life and example of the

Saviour, and taught me to contemplate with admiration and delight, the purity, benevolence, and piety, of that holy pattern. They tried to make it my ambition to imitate him ; and never shall I forget how I was sometimes affected by the earnest and feeling manner in which they told me the wonderful story of his love and sufferings, and urged me to begin young and follow him.

Such, in general, was something of the system of paternal instruction to which I owed so much ; for it gave me a religious propensity, which in all the after struggles and sins of life, I never lost.—Truly, God's greatest blessings are pious and faithful parents !



CHAPTER II.

In the account I gave, in the former chapter, of my religious education, I rather described the method of my parents, and the design they had in view, than its actual effect on myself ;—for I can, by no means, think that I at any time became altogether

such as they wished to make me. But, assuredly, their labour was not lost, for the seed which they so faithfully planted, and assiduously cultivated, never has died, however feebly it may have flourished. The trunk has grown old, and begins to decay; it will soon fail; but there is hope that it “will sprout again, though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground,”—that it will spring up with new vigour and eternal beauty in the garden of God.

My childhood passed like that of other children who have tender and watchful parents, and has left as few distinct traces, which are worth recording. The waves of time have flowed over the track which my little boat made, and I can discern its path no longer.

I was in my thirteenth year when I lost my mother. This is one of the events which made a lasting impression. She had been, for a long time, gradually wasting away, and I had seen the anxious countenance and manner with which my father watched her. But a boy, even of thirteen, is not likely to

understand or realize such signs, and I remember I had no foreboding of the coming calamity. But, at length, I observed an altered tone in the morning and evening prayer of my father, which impressed me. I began to suspect the truth. I observed more narrowly. I discovered that the form was wasted, the cheek had grown pale, the eye had sunk, and disease had made a fearful onset, while my childish eyes had been blinded. And I do not wonder that they were blinded; for the calm and cheerful manner of my mother was unaltered, and she spoke and smiled as she always had done. But I now saw the truth, and every hour served to make me see it yet more plainly. My solicitude soon betrayed itself, and then my father summoned resolution to speak upon the subject to his children. The others were younger than myself. They were frolicking in all the unapprehensive lightness of childhood, when he called us around him. There were four of us. The youngest sprung upon his knee, and playfully put her lips to his mouth; while the rest of us, who perceived the emotion upon his

face, gazed upon him, and gave him our hands without speaking. As soon as he could command himself—"My children," said he, "God has given you a good mother ; but he is about to take her away from you. You will not see her much longer. She is visited by a disease which is hurrying her to the grave, and we can do nothing but weep, and give her back to God. But we must not weep," said he, bursting into tears, "for she is only going home ; going to be happy, which she has not been here. It would be wrong to mourn, for she is only going to sleep a sweet sleep, and we shall all, by and bye, sleep too, and then shall all rise together, if we have been good."

Not many days after this, my mother called me to her, as I sat in the chamber, and, kissing my cheek—"You are old enough," said she, "to know what death means, and to learn a lesson from it. I am soon to die. I have known it for a long time, and have perfectly prepared my mind to meet the event. I have no longer reluctance or fear. And now, my dear son, while I speak to you, perhaps for the last time,

hear my parting counsel. I have tried to teach you your duty, and to fill your mind with religious principles. Do not swerve from those principles. They are my support now, they always have been my support. You will need them as much as I do. And if you would cherish them, and have them strong, I charge you never pass a day without prayer.—Promise me this, and I shall feel easy.” I kissed her hand, and bowed my head; for I could not speak. She put her hand beneath the pillow, and taking thence a locket, containing a braid of her own hair, she gave it to me. “I do not know,” said she, “that departed spirits are acquainted with what happens to the friends they have left on earth; but if they are, I shall never cease to watch your life with maternal solicitude. Think of this whenever your eyes meet this memorial of my love. Reflect that, perhaps I see you, and remember the promise you have made me; or, if not so”—she added in a voice of inconceivable expressiveness,—“reflect that *God* sees you, and bears witness whether you keep that promise or not. My dear

son, farewell ! a mother's parting blessing is on your head ; and do Thou, O Father, bless him, and make him thine !" She kissed me again, and sunk back exhausted.

It seems as if I still heard her voice, and gazed upon her composed, but animated features. And it is one of the joyful anticipations of my approaching removal from earth, that I shall again see that face, and be united to her pure spirit, never to part again. I had no spirit, after this, to leave her side, or to engage in any occupation. I was suffered to remain near her ; to see the gradual approach of dissolution ; and to witness the tranquillity and cheerfulness with which christian faith can await the appalling summons. She was too weak to say much, but sometimes gave a word of encouragement, admonition, or blessing, to those who were near her, and after she became unable to speak, she still looked unutterable things, and smiled upon those who did her any little offices of kindness.— All was peace within and without ; and gently at last did she sink asleep in Jesus, without a groan or a struggle, and with an

expression on her face as if she had already caught a glimpse of the glory to come.

There are some who would keep children from the chamber of death, and remove from their minds, as soon as possible, the impressions which sorrow may have made. They little consider the natural buoyancy of the mind, and the tendency of all feeling to pass away from a young heart. My father was one of those who thought the solemn impressions of such a season should be deepened, and pains taken to make them lasting. He thought that much might be done to give right views of the value and purposes of existence, and to get ready that frame of mind which is best fitted to meet and endure the changes of the world. By his conversation, therefore, and instruction, for a long period, he kept fresh the feelings to which this sad event had given birth.— He did not converse a great deal in the formal way; it was not his habit, and he rather avoided it, from a persuasion that it was not an effectual mode of addressing young persons. I do not think that he ever made a long harangue to his children upon any

subject. His custom was to seize moments when their minds were cheerful and at ease, or when any remarkable event had excited their attention, and by a few concise, pointed remarks, sometimes by only one single emphatic expression, convey the important lesson. He would then leave it to work upon their minds. And it would often happen that the words would sink down into their hearts, and never be forgotten. I can recall many examples of forcible sayings thus uttered, which were of great use to me afterward ; but am certain that the same sentiment, diluted into a formal speech of fifteen or twenty minutes, would have made no impression, and been altogether lost.

Upon the present occasion, he pursued his customary course. He spoke seldom ; but because seldom, I dwelt the more upon what he did say. I forgot nothing. And as he directed my reading, and the whole occupation of my time, I was, for a long season, prevented from returning to the sports of my childhood, or regaining the frolicksome dispositions of boyhood.

CHAPTER III.

The education of his children now became the favorite employment of my father. His parish was in a small and retired village, and his parishioners of that humble class, who require nothing more of their minister than an affectionate interest in their welfare, and the plainest instruction in the plainest truths. His duties as a minister, therefore, were not burdensome, and afforded him ample time for the superintendence of his children's education. He was a man of excellent understanding, and admirable love of learning; and well do I remember how delightful he made those years of instruction, by orally communicating the various knowledge with which his mind was full. It was the dear wish of his heart, that I should follow him in the ministerial profession; and while he strove to give me settled principles of religion and habitual devotion, he strove zealously also to store my mind with every variety of knowledge that could adorn and strengthen it. He had a great abhorrence of an ill-educated ministry; and kept me

from college till I was eighteen, with the express design of teaching me many things which he thought I could not learn there. Though at the same time, I doubt not, he was influenced by the wish to gratify himself by so pleasant an occupation of his lonely and widowed time.

As the time approached when I was to go to college, it became necessary to provide some additional means for supporting me there. A country minister may manage with his children at home pretty well, for they may aid him in his little farm. But it is not so easy to support them abroad. It was consequently necessary that I should try to earn something for myself. A school was found for me in a town thirty miles distant, and I left home in November, to spend the winter in this new and anxious employment. My little wardrobe and a few books were tied together in a handkerchief, and slung over my shoulder with a stick, and so I trudged along, as many greater men have done.

This winter was an important one to me, as it left its traces upon my whole after life.

I was a very bashful young man, wholly unaccustomed to the society of men, and quite ignorant of the world. Great, therefore, were the sufferings I endured, both in school, and out of school. I was anxious, from principle, to do my duty ; but from timidity and inexperience, I failed to give perfect satisfaction. My own anxiety exaggerated my deficiency, to my own view, and often did I wet my pillow with the tears that were wrung from my oppressed heart. Such trials, however, did me good, as they helped me in learning to face the world, and cast me more exclusively on my religious convictions for support and happiness. I have always found that seasons of removal to strange places and new duties, have been those in which my faith and sense of duty have been most rapidly improved. When all others were strangers around me, I went the more frequently to God, as a father and accustomed friend.

But what I remember particularly in this season, was the trial I underwent in learning the stress that was laid upon the differences among Christians. My father, as I have

said before, lived in a retired village, to which the noise of the polemic world did not reach ; and whose inhabitants, happy in the simplicity of good and holy lives, felt no interest in the *questions of words*, on which the faith and charity of so many are suspended. They read their Bibles, attended public worship, and lived soberly, righteously, and piously in the world. There was nothing among them of the pride either of orthodoxy or heresy. My father held, himself, and was laborious to instil into his people, the most enlarged charity toward all. He was disgusted at the spirit of narrowness and bigotry, which he had always seen accompanying a vehement zeal for particular forms of faith. He therefore rarely alluded, either in preaching or in conversation, to the differences among christians. He seldom even named the names of theological parties. And thus it happened that, strange as it may seem, I grew up almost ignorant that there were parties in religion, entirely unacquainted with their badges of distinction, and with none of that prejudice for and against names, which is often the earliest

lesson in religion. It had not escaped me, in the books which fell in my way, that there had been divisions and strifes in the church; but I saw and heard nothing of them in the world around me, and I felt as though nothing of them existed.

On the evening of my arrival at my new quarters, I was greatly struck with the tone and language of my host and hostess in speaking of religion. It was different from any thing I had ever heard before, and it puzzled me. Mrs Hilson was so frequent in her scriptural allusions, and phrases of piety, as to introduce them sometimes very improperly and irreverently; but in her husband there seemed a constantly half-suppressed sneer, and disposition to throw ridicule on the subject. Both were so different from the serious, manly, intelligible, and reverent manner in which I had always seen the subject treated at home, that I was not a little perplexed to know what to think. One of the school committee, who was also deacon of the church, came in during the evening, to see the new master, and give his instructions. As I was too diffident to

talk much, and the deacon had but little to say on the business of my profession, the conversation took a turn but little different from a catechetical lecture. After many common-place questions, such as an inquisitive stranger naturally puts first, deacon Lombard inquired what were the opinions of my father. I felt ashamed not to be able to give a direct answer, and waited for him to put the question in a different shape. "I mean," said the deacon, "is he Arminian or Calvinist?" This question was hardly more intelligible to me than the former; but thinking it would never do to say I did not understand him, and feeling tolerably confident that I should speak the truth, I replied, "I believe he is an Arminian." The deacon gave a *hem*! of surprise, and walked across the room. Mrs Hilson dropped her knitting, and fixed upon me a look of sad concern; and her husband stopped poking the fire, and turned round with a half merry stare, as if to know whether he had heard aright. I felt my face colour suddenly all over, and I thought I must have made some dreadful blunder. No one spoke for some time. At

length the deacon said—"An Arminian!—we don't think much of Arminians here." The tone of his voice went to my heart, and the sound of it rung in my ears for weeks. I never had before witnessed this abhorrence of a name; and such a crowd of feelings rose within me, that I could do nothing but remain silent and confused. Mr Hilson relieved me by saying, "But, deacon, there may be some good men amongst the Arminians." "That's more than you know, or I either," said the deacon. "But you think it's possible they may be saved, don't you?" rejoined my host. "It is not promised," replied the deacon; "it is not in the covenant; and as they do not hold the true faith, they are certainly in a dangerous way. I should not expect I could be saved myself, if I was one of them." "But all things are possible with God," said Mrs Hilson mildly. "True," said the deacon; "and if any of his elect be in this error, he will snatch them from it before they die."

The course which conversation had thus taken, led to the statement of all the tenets of Calvinism, to which I listened with

amazement, sometimes mingled with horror; for many things were so new and strange, so apparently contradictory, so repugnant to my most cherished feelings of religion, that I seemed to be in some region of romance, rather than among Christians. Of one thing I felt certain, that if I had wrongly called my father an Arminian, at least he was not a Calvinist. But what is there so much an object of horror in an Arminian;—why so difficult for him to be saved?—I was lost in the perplexity of my own thoughts.

Before the deacon went, he proposed to join the family in prayer. He first read the 8th chapter of Romans, and then poured out a long and earnest prayer, of great vehemence and minuteness, in which I was made an object of special supplication. The loudness and fervour of this act of worship, so different from the calm and subdued tone of my father, thrilled and agitated me with a new feeling; and when the deacon, as he went out, put his hand solemnly on my head, and with an affectionate emphasis, wished me God's blessing and success in my new office, I was overpowered, and burst

into tears. I cannot pretend to explain my feelings. They were a chaos of confusion. I was young, every thing was novel, my situation was such as to render me uncommonly susceptible, and religion was presented to me in a form altogether new, and with something inexplicably solemn in the manners of its professors. Those who have been ever placed in a situation in any measure similar, will understand something of the feelings which kept me many hours awake that night ; and will easily perceive that I could come to no conclusion, except that of writing to my father as soon as possible, to inquire what was an Arminian, and what he himself was. Being quieted by this determination, and comforted by my prayers, I at last fell asleep.

CHAPTER IV.

Under some circumstances, the feelings I have named would soon have passed away, and my mind have returned to its usual state. But my situation was such as to keep me

agitated and harassed in spirit for a long season. I however always have seen cause to rejoice in that trial of my faith, and to render thanks to my heavenly Father, who thus established, strengthened, and settled me in the true and living way.

It was expected of the master that he should pray in the school, morning and evening. I knew it to be the custom, and had been greatly disturbed in the anticipation of being called to its performance; for, as I have said, my natural diffidence was extreme. As the time drew near, the dread of it weighed upon my mind with an oppression which I cannot describe; and when the moment came, upon the first morning, my resolution failed me, and I commenced the ordinary business without a prayer. This, however, was no relief, for I felt that I had done wrong. My conscience severely reproached me, and for several days I was made wretched by the struggle to overcome what I thought a sinful timidity and shrinking from religious duty, which could not fail to bring upon me the heavy displeasure of God. At length my religious sense of duty

got the victory, and on Saturday morning, I, for the first time in my life, addressed my Creator in the presence of fellow-beings.

I was so engrossed by my own feelings in this affair, that it had not occurred to me that I might draw upon myself the displeasure of the village. It had not even suggested itself to me, that what was done in school was known abroad. I returned to my lodgings at noon, happy in the triumph I had gained over myself. I was hardly seated, when a gentleman entered, who was introduced to me as Mr Reynolds, the minister of the parish. He saluted me coldly, and after a momentary pause, began the conversation by saying with some sternness, "Young man, I understand that you do not pray in your school. The duty never was neglected before in this town; and if you are not sensible enough of its importance to attend to it, you are unfit for the place.—How can we expect a blessing on our children, if God be not remembered in their instructions; and how can he be fit to teach, who will not seek wisdom from above." This unexpected address confounded me;

and, after all that I had suffered in my mind, was more than I could sustain. I burst into tears, and, as well as I was able, stated the exact truth. Mr Reynolds was not a man to appreciate the diffidence which had caused my error, and he rebuked me for yielding to it. He expressed his satisfaction, however, that I had conquered it. "I have heard of your father," said he, "though I do not know him personally. I am not solicitous for the acquaintance of those who are not perfectly sound in their views; and I am not surprised that the religious faith he has brought you up in, is too weak to overcome your fear of the world. Nothing but the genuine gospel can subdue that false pride of the natural heart. But I trust you will learn better. God has sent you here at a propitious season for the interests of your soul, and I do not doubt you will find it blessed to you. There is a powerful work of grace going on amongst us. The Holy Spirit is evidently in the midst, and there is a great rattling among the dry bones. Our meetings are frequent, full, and solemn. You must attend them, of course, as many

as you can, and you will see such operations of Divine power as are wonderful to behold."

Much more, and more earnestly, he talked on this topic, and at length pressed me with close and trying questions respecting my own religious opinions and experience ; and drew from me a minute account of negligences and failures, which he represented to me as glaring and dangerous defects. My conscience was a tender one, and easily joined in accusations against myself. I had a horror of displaying myself to greater advantage than the truth, which led me to conceal almost every thing in my religious character which he would have approved. I could not bring myself to speak of those secret exercises of my spirit, which I accounted sacred to the inspection of heaven. Mr Reynolds argued warmly, and warned me earnestly. His tone of expostulation was powerful in itself, as well as new to me. I felt it to my heart's core. My timid spirit shrunk and trembled. He left me in a state of amazement and anxiety, which robbed me of the perfect possession of my faculties for the remainder of the day.

In the afternoon, when, of course, I was unengaged, several friends of my host called in, who were interested in the religious state of the village, and made it the subject of their conversation. They talked of the meetings which had been held, of the cases of those who had been affected, and described at length the situation and exercises of some of the converts. A wholly novel scene was thus unveiled to me. I saw religion and religious feelings presented in a new light. And the eagerness with which the matter was discussed, the breathless curiosity and sympathy expressed in the eye, the flushed cheek, and the impatient attitudes of speakers and listeners, were calculated to make a deep impression upon a novice like myself. The comparison of this exhibition with what I had always seen, and revered, and loved as true religion, perplexed and distressed me. I could gain no peace after many hours of anxious thinking, but by remembering that longer observation would teach me what was right, and that it was my duty to wait patiently. I gave myself, therefore, to the reading of the

Scriptures, and at length laid myself down calmly to await the opening of the sabbath day.

On this occasion, and on thousands since, I have derived peace from prayer, when every thing else conspired to vex and distress me :—a proof of itself, that a devotion of spirit is the essence of true religion ; and that he who has this, cannot be lost to God, nor be a stranger to his favour, however he may err in controverted truths.

CHAPTER V.

It is impossible for me to follow minutely my recollections of this memorable winter. They would fill a large volume, instead of the few sheets which my trembling hand is able to write. It must suffice to say that the new scenes into which I was thrown, continued to be occasions of severest perplexity and anxiety for many weeks. I had been bred religiously, I had been scrupulously conscientious, I had thought myself a lover of God and man, and rejoic-

ed in the hope in heaven. But my religion had been noiseless and secret. I had seldom conversed respecting it, except at particular moments with my father. I had never been excited by crowds assembled, nor had I ever been conscious of any extraordinary change in my dispositions, or feelings, or life. I had gone on quietly from childhood to youth, conscientiously, but calmly, and with no display of zeal. I had seen in my father precisely the same operation of religion which I had witnessed in myself, except that it was far more perfect. I had thought this the true christian character; and though often I had sighed over my imperfections, yet I never had suspected that I was wrong in principle.

But if what I now saw and heard were the genuine exhibition of religion, then I had been entirely and wofully deceived. If I must believe what was perpetually urged in my ears, then I was only a hypocrite, without Christ, and without hope. Nothing can exceed the distress with which this thought was attended. Many nights did I pass sleepless and weeping with uncontrol-

lable anguish of spirit. I became almost unfit for any duty. My thoughts preyed on my health, till my robust body wasted under the torture of the mind, and my cheek was pale and sunken.

For why, thought I, should I not believe all that I see and hear ? I cannot deny the existence of the sincerest, heartiest religion here. Earth cannot contain a purer and meeker spirit than my hostess possesses ; and where is there more real and actuating piety than in deacon Lumbard, though he be a little narrow ; and where a nobler benevolence and more solemn concern for Christianity than in Mr Reynolds, though he be a little rough ? and then how general and deep is the religious impression that prevails—how serious, how anxious, how devout is the whole village—how indefatigable in teaching and learning—what a sense of the evil of sin, and dread of the Divine displeasure—and not my own father could discover more anxiety for my good than my friends do here.

Yet, while I thus looked with reverence upon the zeal and piety I witnessed, I could

not listen to the representations of gospel doctrine, which were perpetually made, without a certain horror. This, I was told, was an infallible sign of an unrenewed heart; and this served to aggravate my distress. I never had studied controversy, nor heard it preached; but my father had always implied something very different from what I now heard, and I could not reconcile the representations I now met, with the impressions I had received from the Bible. My blood chilled when I heard the arbitrary decree of election announced, and, connected with it, the joy of the righteous in the sufferings of the wicked. I was most distressingly bewildered in the contradictions about depravity and accountability, irresistible grace, involuntary faith, and changes rung, without end, on justification, adoption, sanctification, and imputation. It was a wilderness to me. I turned on every side and could find no relief. If I had only seen these things in books I should have passed them by as wild speculations. But I found them filling the minds and thoughts of men, whose re-

ligious zeal was more imposing to my mind than any thing I had ever met with ; men whom I honoured and loved, who treated me with assiduous kindness, and who assured me, with the earnestness of the most solemn asseveration, that they built all their religion and all their hope on these doctrines, and that they could conceive of no salvation on any other ground. Thus beset, what could I do ? Who would wonder if I had yielded ?

I at length told those who had interested themselves most warmly in my behalf, that there was but one course for me to take, namely, to examine the scriptures anew with fresh care, and abide by the result. To this proposal they warmly assented, not doubting that the Holy Ghost would teach me ; and they left me with solemn prayer to pursue this design.

I look back to the doing of this work with highest gratitude and satisfaction. Every leisure minute found me at my Bible, and the morning often broke while I was yet studying. Earnest were my prayers for light, and sincere my wish to be in-

structed ; and He who heareth prayer heard me, enlightened me, and gave me a happy confidence in the result of my labour. My opinions became fixed and grounded on the sure testimony of God ; and I no longer felt embarrassment at the very opposite representations of gospel truth which were prevailing around me. They could still sometimes blind my eyes for a moment with the dust of metaphysical subtlety ; but the breath of the Divine word soon blew it away, and I saw clearly.

I now became tranquil and happy. My cheerfulness of spirit returned, and with it health. My anxieties ended in a serene and settled peace, no more to be disturbed by the tumult round about me. I came out of the trial in every respect the better for having passed through it. My opinions were more clearly defined and more solidly grounded. My devout feelings were become deeper and more ardent. While at the same time, my intimacy with the sentiments and characters of those who differed from me gave me a juster view of them, and a more real regard for them, than under

any other circumstances I could have attained. This has been of incalculable benefit to me through life. I have been preserved by it from a great deal of false and censorious judging, and enabled to discriminate between the merits and weaknesses of my more orthodox brethren, so as to maintain for them a sincere respect and unchanging charity. And I have always found that those are least bigoted, who are best acquainted with those whom they oppose. Nothing destroys uncharitableness and censoriousness so certainly, as an intimacy with the habitual feelings and characters of men of other sects. Bigotry is the offspring of ignorance.

Such was the end, and such, in few words, have been the consequences of the scenes I have described. But my trials were not yet over. My own mind was satisfied, but others were dissatisfied ; and I was doomed to endure coldness, reproach, suspicion, and alienation from many who had been forward to instruct me, and who had professed the warmest friendship. I was made the subject of village gossip and scandal ; a thousand

false and calumnious reports were spread abroad ; and I became little better than a heathen and a publican to the zealots, who, a few weeks before, seemed ready to sacrifice even their lives for me. But of these things I must speak in another chapter.



CHAPTER VI.

The trials to which I alluded in my last chapter, as coming upon me in consequence of my decision in regard to religion, were of several sorts. I can name them but in few words. I had supposed that all who professed a friendship for me, and had so zealously interested themselves in my behalf, would rejoice with me in the relief of mind I had gained, even though they might have wished that my conclusions had been nearer their own. But in this I was disappointed. From the moment it became known in what manner my concern of mind had terminated, and that I was not to be *brought out* as a convert after their fashion ; there was a manifest change in the manners of

many toward me. Instead of cordiality I found coldness, instead of a welcome I met a repulse. And I soon found that all their zeal for my soul's welfare, was little more at bottom than a desire to have the eclat of the schoolmaster's conversion; that there was a grievous disappointment, not at the danger in which my soul was placed, but in this frustration of a party object. I had too much proof of this to fear that I charge them wrongfully.

But this was not the case with all. Some were truly and benevolently afflicted for my own sake. Amongst these was my excellent hostess, Mrs Hilson. I had all along held the most free communication with her; she knew the whole state of my mind, and had acted toward me the part of a mother. She was too gentle and meek to be bigoted; but as all her own rich treasures of religious comfort and hope were built on the doctrines she had been taught, and they were dearly associated with every pious and benevolent sentiment of her soul, she very naturally could conceive of no real religious happiness from any different source. When

she found that I could not draw from this, she was troubled ; for she thought there was none other. She did not question my sincerity, but lamented my blindness in not seizing what, from *her own experience*, she knew to be the only secret of happiness. Wiser persons than she have made the same mistake of trying all others by their own experience ; while in fact men's experiences differ as much as their faces.

I never shall forget the kind and tender interest she expressed toward me to the last of my residence in the village. She was in all my solitudes a faithful friend. To her I could unbosom myself without restraint, and find relief from her sympathy. Our hearts could feel and pray together, however we might vary in our creeds. And to the last of her life, while her friends and my friends were zealously accusing each other of corrupting the whole gospel, she ceased not to feel, that there might be Christians who were not Calvinists ; and I, for her sake, have always been able to see the spirit of the gospel reigning even among those whose speculations were most hostile

to its truths. Indeed, who that has ever formed an intimate acquaintance beyond the narrow pale of his own sect, does not feel the wicked meanness of that bigotry which confines piety and salvation to those who agree with himself?

“I still hope,” said Mrs Hilson, the evening before I returned to my father’s house — “I still hope and trust, that you will see reason to think differently.” “I pray that I may,” said I, “if I am wrong; I have no wish but to learn and follow the truth; and I say sincerely, that I think I could in a moment embrace any opinion which could be proved to be of divine authority. You have yourself seen how anxious I have felt, and how diligently I have sought.” “Certainly, certainly,” she replied; “you have done your duty well, and I think God will not leave so sincere a soul in darkness. It is this that makes me sure you will, by and bye, be brought right. We must wait His good time.”

“But why,” said Mr Hilson, who was a blunt, good-natured man, “why, Betsey, should you wish master Anderson to change?”

I am sure there is not a cleverer, honester man, nor better master to be found. And as for his religion, he 's as serious and prayerful, and studies his Bible as hard as any of them, though to be sure, he is not for making such a noise about it. Now to my mind, this is the right way; and I am sure, that if any body could make me a Christian, it would be just this Mr Anderson. And his quiet sort of religion, now, would do more to work upon the minds of one half the people here, than all the stir that 's been made this winter. Why, there 's a great many been driven away from all kinds of religion by the confusion we 've had about it. I believe I should have been myself, if it had not been for the master. And there 's many a one that will never get over his disgust, but is made, I warrant it, profane for life."

"You astonish me," said I, for this was entirely new to me; "it is not conceivable that men should be so unreasonable. What, fly off to irreligion, because their neighbours are so engaged in religion? They must be very ill-disposed persons."

“No ;” replied he, “not so ill-disposed neither ; some very consciencious men have been affected in this way ; and if I was to speak my mind, I should say that this stir has cooled as many friends to religion as it has made.”

“Husband, husband,” cried Mrs Hilson, “how can you say so ? I am truly ashamed of you.”

“Look here, my dear,” said he, “who is likely to know most of it : you, who see only one side—or I, who see both sides ? Now I know all that ’s going on, and all that ’s said, everywhere in the village ; while you only know what passes at meeting and among go-to-meeting folks ; and I can tell you beyond all doubt that the devil has gained some disciples as well as Christ. I ’ll tell you a few things. I ’ve heard more swearing, and seen more drinking and ill-temper amongst the men, because of this thing, than I ever knew in the village before in my life ; and from some very reputable folks too. There ’s the Joneses and the Malcolms have not been calm this two months ; and there ’s no doubt their wives

would do more for religion by staying at home and making their houses happy with it, than by running away and causing their husbands and children to hate it.—Then, besides those that are hurt in this way, you know there are some of the converts that are said to be none the better since their zeal has cooled. You know how ** and *** and **** turned out, and there are more too.”

“You ought not to triumph over this,” said I.

“And I do not,” said he; “but there are them that do, and it has afforded more joy and jests to infidels and blasphemers than I can tell you of. Now does not this do harm to real religion? And would not it all have been prevented by permitting matters to go on quietly and soberly as in times past? For, take five years together, there would have been as many Christians made in the usual way, as by all this extraordinary movement; while at the same time none of this extraordinary evil would have been done. This is not all. It is incredible what sin has been committed in the way of slander and lying, and that by very pious people

too. I'll tell you what reports have been spread about you, master Anderson, just by way of specimen. First, it got about that you were under deep concern of mind, and had written home to your father, who told you not to be troubled, for the people were mad, and religion would spoil you for a schoolmaster. That you became afterward more earnest, and when you could get no comfort from your father's principles, he sent you to Mr Reynolds, and you found peace. That then your father, too, became anxious, and came to see Mr Reynolds, and confessed to him that he had never felt religion, and was more than half an infidel; and that he was converted and went home, and got up a revival in his own parish. All this and much more was made up out of the whole cloth, and circulated as so much gospel by those who knew it was all false. And when it was discovered that your mind was settled another way, then it was said, and is believed to this day, that you have got another Bible, different from ours; and that a good part of the time you pretended to be studying the Scriptures, you were play-

ing cards in your room with R—— and E——. For a whole day it was believed that you had told the children it was all nonsense to pray in the school, and you should do it no longer. I could tell you a great deal more of the same sort, and so you must not wonder that some folks think there is no religion in what bears so much bad fruit.”

Mrs Hilson appeared as much disconcerted at this disclosure, as I was amazed. She said, however, that it was fair to look on both sides, and count the wheat in the field, as well as the tares. “True,” said her husband; but will every body do that? Most persons will not do it; and consequently, most persons will be injured,”

“But you and I must do it,” said I. “Religion is a solemn reality, whatever imperfections there may be in its friends; and surely you will not on account of those imperfections refuse to strive for your own salvation.”

Mr Hilson has since told me, that this sentiment struck him more forcibly than any preaching he had ever heard. I am happy to add, that he became one of the most en-

lightened and sincere Christians I have ever known.

I parted from my friends the next morning, amidst the most affectionate wishes. Deacon Lumbar came to give me his parting blessing, and to say that he did not doubt he should yet see me all he could wish, for he loved me too well to think otherwise. As I passed the minister's door, I stopped to bid him farewell. He shook me by the hand, saying he loved me none the less for my honesty, and doubted not God had a blessing for me. The kindness of these two good men was a cordial to my spirits. I left them better and happier for having known them; rejoicing that there was a better world, where imperfection would be done away, and where the holy light of unveiled truth would dissipate the little cloud that now hovered between us.

CHAPTER VII.

My college life, on which I now entered, was like that of many other young men. I applied myself zealously to the duties required of me, and became ambitious of distinction. My thirst for knowledge increased, and with it my desire of eminence. I allowed myself little time for sleep or recreation. I denied myself even food, that I might sit at my books without the necessity of exercise to help digestion. I know not how it was, but gradually and insidiously literary distinction became my ruling passion. My Bible was consulted less frequently, my seasons of devotion were hurried over, and even the worship of the sabbath came at last to be attended by me with little interest or feeling.

I was sometimes uneasy at perceiving the change which had taken place in my affections, and felt alarmed for the result. But I satisfied myself with saying, that as soon as I should be relieved from my present hurry, or have finished the study I had now on hand, I

should have leisure to resume my religious vigilance. But this leisure did not come, and I suffered myself still to go on. I quieted the remonstrances of my mind with the persuasion, that a man can not feel equally engaged at all times on any subject; and that at any rate I was preparing myself for the duties of life, and why was not this as acceptable service as the performance of my religious duties? Then if conscience answered, that the preparation for future duty is no excuse for neglecting present duty, I stifled the suggestion by burying my thoughts in study.

I tremble to this day to think of the hazard I was running, and in how dreadful a ruin it might have ended, if it had not pleased God to send me a rebuke. I had already entered my senior year, and with a heart full of ambition was pressing on to realize, in the honours before me, the darling object of my hope. I had overplied my powers, and they gave way. My body refused to sustain the labours of my mind, and after four weeks' severe illness it was thought I must sink to the tomb.

Of the early part of my sickness I have no recollection, except of a confused feeling of disappointment and vexation at being thus stopped and frustrated in my career. It seems to me like some long dream, in which I was struggling with envious and malicious foes, who were conspiring against my improvement and reputation. I seemed at length to awake from the dream, and found myself a feeble and helpless man, stretched upon my bed, and attended by friends whose anxious countenances revealed to me their fears.

“What is that bell for?” was the first question I asked.

“It is tolling for the Exhibition,” said my friend.

“The Exhibition!” said I, starting with surprise; “how long have I been sick?”

“Nearly four weeks.”

“Exhibition!” I repeated—“and I am not ready; I cannot be there;—when I had so depended on it—so longed for it—and here am I shut out from——When shall I be able to go out, Thompson?”

“You must lie still,” said Thompson,

“you are too weak to talk ; keep yourself quiet.” And he withdrew from the bed.

Thompson’s voice and manner struck me, and I at once suspected the truth. Never shall I forget the feeling that came over me, as the conviction flashed across my mind that I was dangerously ill. A cold thrill run through my frame, and the sweat issued upon my forehead. “And is this,” thought I, “the end of all my toils, the completion of my hopes ? Is it all to end in an early grave and a forgotten memory ? Spare me, O God, that I may recover strength before I go hence to be seen no more.”

As soon as my first surprise was over, I set myself to collect my thoughts as well as I was able, and to prepare my mind for the event. And now the wide extent of my folly became visible at once. I saw the full measure of my negligence, and the whole unworthiness of my delusion. I felt the emptiness of that ambition, for which I had sacrificed my religious affections, and would have given the world to return to that spiritual frame which I had possessed two years before. Then I thought of my privileges, my oppor-

tunities, the discipline I had passed through, the early instructions of my mother, the faithful counsels of my father ;—and as I thought of him, I involuntarily spoke out, “Has my father been sent for, Thompson?”

Thompson looked at me with surprise, and after a few moments’ hesitation answered, yes, and that he was expected to arrive to-morrow.

To-morrow came, and at the expected hour my father entered the chamber. He had evidently come from a hurried journey, and wore a countenance of anxiety and grief. I held out my hand, and he took it without speaking. We both were thinking of a separation, and for some moments could not trust ourselves with our voices. At length I broke silence, for I had been fortifying myself for the interview, and had my powers under my control.

“My father,” said I, “I rejoice to see you. I know why you are come, and shall feel the easier for your presence. You led me in the beginning of life, and if my life must close, it is a consolation to lean on you at the last.”

"The will of God be done," said he. "I had hoped it would be otherwise ordered, but the will of God be done. I am glad to find you look upon it so calmly. Your religion supports you, as I thought it would."

"I trust in God's mercy," said I; "I need it. O, my father, you do not know how foolish I have been, and how nearly I have lost myself in the love of worldly honours." And I told him the state of my mind for some time previous. "But," I continued, "I have humbled myself before God, and cast myself on his compassion. I have thrown away my false ambition, and renewed my vows and prayers, and I hope I have found pardon and peace. I have given up every thing to my Maker, and trust I may depart in hope. Father, give me your blessing."

He knelt down by my bed and prayed. My soul was thrilled by the sound of that voice, so familiar and so loved, and a thousand tender recollections crowded upon my mind. I was refreshed and strengthened as I listened, and lifted nearer to heaven.

A long silence continued after he had

ended, while we both pursued our own reflections. A length I untied from my neck the locket containing my mother's hair, and handed it to my father. "I wish to leave this," said I, "to my sister Jane, with the same injunction with which my dear mother gave it to me. Tell her that it has been a talisman to me in many a difficulty and temptation; and that if I had never suffered myself to be unmindful to it, I should have been spared the only pain I feel at this time. Bid her, therefore, wear it in memory of her deceased brother and mother, and as a pledge that she will never pass a day without prayer; remembering, that if *we* cannot see how she fulfils the pledge, GOD DOES; and the day is coming when we shall know also."

I was too feeble to pursue the conversation, and soon became faint. I thought myself dying. After I revived, I could catch from the occasional whispers in the room, that it was thought I could not live through another night. I had nothing further which I wished to say, and I laid quietly, in the perfect possession of my

powers, waiting the signal to depart. O, the indescribable sublimity of that hour! Words cannot picture the solemnity of feeling which pervaded my mind, as my thoughts flew, in the pressure and excitement of the season, with the rapidity of lightning, to the past and to the future,—to my own life,—to the truths of Christianity,—to the perfections of God,—to the promises of Christ,—to the prospects of heaven; and the whole was framed, with an intense energy of which I can now hardly conceive, into a perpetual mental prayer. Thus I was occupied until sleep overcame me, and I was lost in forgetfulness.

It was ordained that we should be deceived. He who had brought me low, intended but to chasten and heal me; and when I had learned all that a death-bed could teach, he again breathed health into my frame, and bade me live to praise him.

CHAPTER VIII.

Seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, and all these things shall be added unto you.

These words were perpetually present to my mind, during my recovery from the illness I have mentioned, and gave rise to much salutary reflection which helped to establish my resolution for the future. I felt how easily the one thing needful slips away from those who cease to seek it, and how liable even a religious man is to lose the substance of happiness in pursuing the shadow. I persuaded myself that if the prime object of DUTY were secured, a man could never feel any thing actually wanting to his well-being ; for it is very evident that the pursuit of the highest duty and most permanent good, is consistent with the pursuit and enjoyment of every other object really desirable.

I experienced the truth of this at once, in returning to the studies of my class. My great struggle had been to subdue my in-

ordinate ambition. It had interfered with my religion, and must be sacrificed. It was a dear sacrifice, but I took my resolution, and it was performed. The consequence, I supposed would be, that I should fall from my standing as a scholar, and graduate with less reputation than I had coveted. This was a mortifying anticipation; but better risk my scholarship than my religion, thought I, and I summoned firmness to brave the result. This result was quite other than I expected. In proportion as I became indifferent to my reputation, for mere reputation's sake, I found myself able to study and recite with greater ease and self-possession. Formerly my extreme anxiety to do well, and my morbid dread of doing ill, had occasioned an irritability and hurry of spirits, which often threw me off my self-command. and produced the very evils I sought to avoid. But now, having little desire except to do my duty, I was cool, collected, and preserved the full command of my powers. So that, to my surprise, I acquitted myself better than formerly, and rose in my class, rather than fell. A certain portion of every day

was sacredly devoted to religious exercises and studies ; and the time thus subtracted from classical pursuits, was more than compensated by the steadiness of mind and equanimity of feeling which it produced.

Here then was the first reward of my renewed fidelity. I was permitted to experience, then, as I have always done since, that our religion has the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come. How many deceive themselves and are miserable from not knowing this ! They sell themselves to the world, and take the world's wages ; which at the moment of death they are compelled to resign, and then have nothing which they can carry hence. Whereas, in the service of God, they might have no less enjoyed what earth affords, besides all the present and future satisfactions of the soul, which are far richer and purer. There is no state of the mind so happy in itself, and at the same time so fitted for success in the duties of the world, and for contentment amid its difficulties, as the tranquil and composed frame of habitual devotion.

From this time my resolution was taken

to devote myself to the ministry. There had always been a prevailing desire in my mind to engage in this office ; but sometimes my distrust of myself, and sometimes my occupation in other studies, had prevented me from making an absolute decision. But my late experience had so wrought upon me, that I could think of no other occupation consistent with duty. I suspected it to be my father's wish, though he had never intimated it to me. When I named to him my determination, he expressed his hearty approbation. " This," said he, " is what I have looked forward to with earnest hope. It has been from your childhood my constant wish and prayer that I might see you join with me in the great work of the gospel. I rejoice that the day has come, and that without one doubt or fear, I may encourage you to go on, and bid you God speed. Your faith and perseverance have already been tested. You know what trial is, and will be able, from the wisdom of personal experience, to help others who are tried. Enter the work and prosper. You will still meet with trials, severe and heavy ; but He,

in whose strength you have hitherto been safe, will always provide a way of escape if you but seek it."

I would that I had room to record all the instruction which he imparted on this and on other occasions, with the affectionate piety of a christian minister, and the overflowing tenderness of a parent. I would that I had been more sensible, at the time, of their value, and how much it was enhanced by the fact, that I was not long to enjoy his intercourse. But for two precious years I did enjoy it. I was employed as teacher of the school in my native village, and lived and studied in the house of my birth. I was my parent's companion at home, and in his visits abroad. I read with him the most important books, in my preparatory studies, and we conversed familiarly on all topics of theology and morals. Happy and profitable were those days! when I was permitted to cheer the declining path of him who gave me birth, at the same time that I was drawing from him treasures of ministerial experience to guide me after he should be departed!

CHAPTER IX.

The entrance on the ministry is a period of anxiety and excitement of spirit which no one can look back upon, even after the lapse of years, without a throb of emotion. To a conscientious man, who feels the weight and responsibility of the office, the exercises of that season are deep and trying. About to appear as the messenger of God's word to the souls of men,—to be the herald of eternal truths,—to be a fellow labourer with Christ in the work of human salvation, and the bearer of the prayers and the intercessions of men to the mercyseat of heaven; his spirit is oppressed, and trembling, and ready to faint—for how can he discharge so various and awful vocations? But then, again, when he considers the incalculable importance of the work to which none other on earth is to be equalled; when he thinks of the honour of bearing part in it, the shame of drawing back, and the wide field for doing good—his spirits become animated, and he girds himself for the toil with alacrity and zeal.

It seems as it were but yesterday that I was passing through this alternation of hopes and fears, of exhilaration and despondency. I still see the chamber which I paced for hours, anxious and sleepless, night after night: and where I gradually gained resolution to begin the sacred work. Forty-seven years are past and gone, but it is fresh as the memory of to-day. I have passed through, in those years, heavy vicissitudes of earthly lot, and waves of trouble have rolled over my heart, enough to obliterate from it every trace of that early anxiety. But it abides vividly in my memory, and the old man of seventy-two feels over again as he writes, all the solitudes of the youth of twenty-five.

It was on the third of September, that after a ride of twenty miles, I reached the village where my father had recommended me to make the first trial of my gifts. I bore a letter from him in my pocket to Mr Carverdale, the infirm minister of the place, offering my service to **aid** him on the Sabbath. The **sun** was just throwing its last beams **upon the spire** of the meeting-house,

as I came upon the little common where it stood, and cast my eyes around in search of the minister's house. This is easily known in a country village, and I immediately rode up to a neat cottage, with a small yard before it, which stood just back of the meeting-house, and was almost lost amid the trees which threw their aged branches around and over it. The old gentleman was sitting in his arm chair at the open door looking out upon the setting sun. I alighted, and approached him with the letter in my hand. While he was engaged in reading it I had leisure to collect myself, and study the appearance of a man whom I had not seen since I was a child, and to whom I was an entire stranger. He was a tall, thin man, whose few remaining hairs were white with the hoary frost of age, and his countenance marked with years and suffering. But there was a majesty and serenity in it which struck me with awe, and would have become an apostle. I think St John might have looked so, when he was carried into the church, as he approached his hundredth year, to repeat his customary benediction, *Little children, love one another.*

“ You are heartily welcome,” said he, when he had finished the perusal of the letter ; “ and I thank your father for his kindness in sending you. But he was always kind, and I can present no better prayer for his son than that he may be like him. I was doubting if I should be able to speak to my poor people to-morrow. I am unusually feeble, I have sensibly decayed this week. I might not be able to address them. But now they will be instructed from younger lips. It will be enough for me to break to them the holy bread. I am glad to have all my strength for that. Who knows but it may be the last time ?”

I felt called upon to say something, and with the real diffidence I felt, I said that I was very sorry he would not have a better substitute to-morrow.

“ Young man” said he, “ let me warn you against a trick of disparaging yourself in this way. It does not become the simplicity and sincerity of the ministerial character. You are in your master’s service, and should use such language to none but him. It may be modesty now, but it will become vanity ;

vanity in its most disgusting dress, the guise of humility. Think of nothing but to do your duty. Do that as well as you are able, and be not anxious to say or to hear in what manner it is done."

This advice did me great good. It taught me to guard against that sensitiveness to the opinion of others, which is so apt to disorder the motives of action; and has saved me perhaps from that painful and ridiculous habit, which I have witnessed in some, of always speaking slightly of what they do for the sake of hearing it praised. It becomes the dignity of a preacher of the gospel not to speak of his labours at all, except to some confidential friend and for the sake of improvement.

"I do not mean to pain you," continued he, "for I have no reason to doubt your sincerity; but I use an old man's privilege of plain speaking to put you on your guard. My light is almost out and I must do good while I can. I am as low in my horizon as yonder sun now is. But while I am here, I would give light to the last. It has always been my prayer, that I might

sink to my bed as that glorious luminary does now, useful to the latest moment, and unshadowed by a cloud. God save me from the empty, shattered remnant of existence, which would be a weariness to myself and a burden to others. Yet I fear that the prayer will not be granted, and it will try my patience and faith to have it denied. But His will be done ! You," continued he, " are like that sun in his rising, rejoicing in the prospect before you of a day of light and glory, of a work of beneficence and love, in which you shall cause righteousness and piety to bud and become fruitful. It is an excellent and most blessed work ! Enter it and prosper ! May God be your light, and honor you abundantly in the kingdom of his dear Son."

He rose from his seat, and leaning upon me entered the room where his family was sitting. " We always pray at sunset," said he. The ancient family Bible was brought forward, from which a chapter was read, upon which he made a few remarks, and then uttered a fervent prayer. It seemed to come from a patriarch's lips, and to be instinct with the devotion of that future world on whose borders he stood.

We retired early to rest, and arose with the sun, on the morning of the Sabbath. The trembling voice of the aged servant of Christ mingled with the early stirrings of the morning breeze, and welcomed, in the animated accents of praise, the blessed recollections of holy time. His whole air was serene, tranquil and thoughtful. He seated himself again by the door of his cottage, and remained there, musing and conversing at intervals, until we were summoned to the public service.

My attention had been so much diverted from myself, and my mind so interested in the conversation and character of this good old man, that I passed through the trial of my opening ministry with far happier feelings than I had anticipated. When the exercise was concluded, he arose in his place, and reminded the church that the emblems of their Master's love awaited them. "Would to God," said he, in his feeble, tremulous voice, while he turned his eyes around upon the congregation; "would to God, that ye were all disposed and ready to partake of them. My infirmities warn

me that this is the last time they will be dispensed by my hand. Ah, why are ye not all waiting to receive them ? For more than half a century have I broken this bread here ; I then entreated and urged you all to come and partake. I have warned, and admonished, and pleaded with you, even unto tears. And yet, how many of you suffer me to leave you, and carry up with me, when I go hence, the sad story that you have no mark of gratitude for a Saviour's love, no obedience for a Saviour's dying command. You are willing to oppress my last hours with the bitter thought, that for many of you I have laboured in vain, and though I have loved you here, I may hardly hope to join you again in the eternal communion with the saints. Dear friends, let it not be thus. I stand here to bid you farewell. Who of you is willing it should be eternal ? Who of you would part, never to meet again ? I hope and pray for better things. I *will* hope that, although we have not set down together here, we shall be permitted to do it hereafter. And let me ask of you for this once at least, this

last opportunity, not to leave me : but remain, one and all, and witness, though you do not participate. Who can tell how it may please God to manifest himself to you? Who can tell, while we all join our prayers and devotions for the last time, what influence may descend to bless us? Who can tell but our remaining together now, may be the omen that we shall be prepared to meet in a higher state?"

The effect of this unexpected address, delivered with quivering lips, and the piercing accents of deep and earnest feeling, was irresistible. Not one of the congregation left his place. The minister descended to the table, and an affecting service ensued, whose deep and touching solemnity I have never seen surpassed. Many there were, who, like myself, received impressions that never passed away. And many, I doubt not, will be found at the Supper of the Lamb in heaven, who, but for that hour's holy and overwhelming feeling, had never sat at his table on earth.

CHAPTER X.

It will not be thought surprising that by the scene which I described in the last chapter, Mr Carverdale was entirely exhausted. While the excitement of the occasion lasted, he looked and spoke with almost the animation of youth. But, when it was over, he sunk down weak, trembling, and nearly fainting. The old cords had been stretched more than they could bear, and lost their tone for ever. When the people had dispersed, he attempted to rise from his seat and follow them, but was unable. Several of his friends advanced to his assistance. "The light is almost burned down," said he, in a voice scarcely audible; "might it only go out here at the altar, how privileged I should be." Some one expressed a hope that it might be yet continued for a season to the benefit of his church. He shook his head. "No," said he; "and why should I wish it? It is only a flickering, fitful flame. It may brighten a moment to-day, but will be dim again to-morrow,

and cheer no one. No ; my poor flock need a vigorous flame,—a burning, and shining light. I am wasted. And if it please my God soon to remove me to a place among the stars of the firmament, why should I lament, or why should you ? For I have that hope ; I thank God, I have that hope.”

This he said with frequent interruptions, showing that his spirit was stirring, though his body was weak. He seemed unable to say more, and was carried in the arms of his friends to his house, and placed in bed. He fell into a sort of sleep, which the physician declared to be the prelude of death, and which he said it would be useless and cruel to disturb by attempting to prolong life. “ The machine,” said he, “ is worn out, and will gradually come to a stop.”

He remained in this state, apparently unconscious of what was passing around him, until I was summoned to the afternoon service. In the same state I found him on my return. In the mean time, the report had obtained currency among his parishioners, that their minister was dying. With affectionate concern they crowded around his

dwelling, and manifested the strongest sense of his worth, and liveliest gratitude for his past services. . Never have I known eulogy more eloquent than that which I read in their tearful eyes, and whispering voices, as they stood silently waiting, or anxiously conversing, before the door, and beneath the windows. Their sound was distinctly heard in the chamber, as I stood with his friends beside his bed. It at length seemed to arouse him, and he opened his eyes. "What is this?" said he.

"The people have come from meeting," it was replied, "and are anxious to know how you do."

"They are kind souls," replied the old minister ; and, turning his eyes around as if looking for some one, he called me by name. I bent over him, and he took my hand. "Go to them, my young friend ; tell them I thank them for all their fidelity and kindness. Carry them my last farewell. Bid them remember my last instructions ; and God bless them."

I went to the door, and beckoning to the several groups, collected them together, and

spoke to them as I was desired. When I returned to the chamber, the good old man was taking leave of his friends, and to each of them giving his blessing. He called for me. He was exhausted, and could no more speak audibly. His lips moved, and I thought I would have given worlds to know what they would utter. After a few moments' silence, he exerted himself again, and we understood him to ask that there might be prayers. I kneeled down, with his hand still in mine, and commended his spirit, in such words as I was able, to the great Father of mercy. It was a solemn moment. There was a silence and awe like that of the tomb, interrupted only by the laborious breathing of the dying man, and the low voice of youthful supplication. When I had ended, he pressed my hand, but said nothing. We feared that he would not speak again; but it was permitted us to hear his last words distinctly. For, when something had been said respecting the good man's support in death, he spoke out audibly, "THE TESTIMONY OF CONSCIENCE, AND THE MERCY OF GOD." This was his last

effort. We stood silently watching for his departing breath, when, as the sun was going down, its beams forced their way through an opening amid the branches of the thick trees which grew before the windows, and fell full upon his face. A smile came over his countenance, and, before it had entirely passed away, he ceased to breathe. I remembered his conversation on the preceding evening, and rejoiced at his quiet departure.

When it was known that their pastor was actually dead, all those of his parishioners who had not retired to their homes, pressed into the house to take a last look of one whom they had loved and revered so much. Not a word was spoken by any one in the chamber of death. The silent gaze, the tearful eye, and the cautious tread, evinced the impression which was upon every heart, and the feeling of awe with which the sleep of the patriarch was contemplated.

My own feelings during these scenes it is impossible for me to describe. But I have always felt that I had reason to thank God for appointing me to open my ministry

in so singular and affecting a manner. The serenity of aged piety, and the peace of a christian death-bed, gave me impressions which helped still more to prepare me for my work. I am certain that for years this day was present almost constantly to my mind, and endowed me with courage, fortitude, and spirituality, which I might not otherwise have attained.



CHAPTER XI.

It was in less than a year after this, that I found myself occupying the place of that venerable old man, of whose last hours I had been so unexpectedly the attendant. It may readily be conceived, that with no ordinary feelings I took possession of the pulpit where I had heard the expiring sounds of his ministry, and seated myself in the room where he had studied, and at the table upon which he had leaned and written for half a century. To my ardent view, every thing about me was sacred. I fancied there was inspiration in the very walls, and that I in-

haled a good spirit from the very air in which the holy man had breathed. And while I studied in his books, and dipped my pen in his inkstand,—while I read from his Bible in the family circle which he had left, and in which I was a boarder, and stood up to offer their daily devotions on the spot which his prayers had consecrated, I am sure that I felt a glow in my heart which more important circumstances have oftentimes been incapable of producing ;—but which was nevertheless highly favourable toward forming a frame of thought and feeling suited to my vocation. Indeed it rarely happens to a young man to begin the arduous work of the ministry under happier auspices. The circumstances of my lot and education had been so ordered, as constantly to excite and keep fresh the religious sentiment. It had not been suffered to become, as in many, drowsy and dull ; but had been stirred and animated by the frequent remarkable scenes through which I had passed. The manner of my introduction to my parish, was calculated to revive and strengthen in no common degree, all

the feelings I had ever experienced, and all the resolutions I had ever made, in relation to the great duties of personal and pastoral religion. I cannot recall to mind this period, without an expression of devout gratitude to Him who appointed my lot, and in whose strength I have toiled on to this day. I have seen some of my brethren disheartened and sinking beneath their load, the victims of a sickly sensibility ; some miserable in their work, because their hearts were not engaged in it ; and some losing their reputation and usefulness through indolence. But for myself, being always possessed of bodily health, and heartily attached to my duties, I never have found them burdensome or fatiguing. And I may say that I never have found them so to any, except those who have wanted the spirit of their office. How shall I cease then, to be thankful for the early instruction of those kind parents, and the severe infliction of that youthful discipline, which formed in me inclinations and desires which nothing could have gratified, but the labours of the sacred office ! They have been my pleasure ;

and nothing else would have afforded me pleasure.

I soon found, however, that there is much to damp the ardour of enthusiastic expectation, with which a young man, ignorant of the world, enters upon his career. I can hardly help sighing, now, when I call to mind the early destruction of many fair visions, which were cruelly dissipated by my further acquaintance with mankind; and the severe and mortifying rebukes, by which my open hearted inexperience learned prudence and caution. It was a great shock to me to discover, so soon as I did, the necessity of distrusting appearances. This was one of the first lessons which I learned by intercourse with my parish,—perhaps one of the most important I ever learned. Certainly none has influenced me more in my whole life since; none perhaps has made me at times so unhappy.

Like other young persons, I trusted to the good show which any one made, and confided implicitly in all that any one might say of himself. I delighted in the warm expression of religious feeling, and was

ready to give up my heart to it, wherever I might find it. I could not believe that zealous profession could be made by any who was insincere at heart. It was a great blow to me to be undeceived.

There were few men in town more assiduous and kind in their attentions to me, after my ordination, than Josiah Dunbar. He recommended himself by his punctual attendance at meeting, and by his fondness to call upon me and converse on religious subjects. He entered fully into the history of his own experience, and drew from me the relation of my own. His appearance was austere, his manners simple and solemn, his voice a little whining, and his eyes were cast in humility upon the ground. His age was about fifty ; and I thought that no young man was ever so blest in the confidence and advice of a devout parishioner.

I found however, that he was not popular in the village ; and that the worldly, sober part of the inhabitants, especially, spoke of him rather slightly. This grieved me ; but I accounted for it by a remark which he himself once, or rather often made, with

a deep sigh and solemn shake of the head, —“ Ah, there is nothing that the world can find lovely in the children of God. They are always despised and trodden upon.”— My experience has since taught me that this is far from being true. But at that time I took it for an established fact, and when I found any commendatory remark which I made respecting Mr Dunbar, received in silence or with a sneer, I imputed it to the natural dislike of men to superior goodness.

Ere long, however, I observed some things in his conversation which I myself disliked. He was too fond, I thought, of complaining of the want of religion in others, and of the great coolness of church members. There was doubtless room for complaint in many instances, but he was too frequent and petulant, and spoke too sarcastically of good moral lives. Now I could see no harm in a good moral life, and once told him, “ that I did not think it so much against a man, that he was a moral man ; that I rather thought it the part of charity to believe that what we cannot see is as good as

what we do see, and that what we do see is, really, though not visibly, grounded on right principle." He was dissatisfied with this remark, and ever after affected to be concerned lest I was resting too much on works. He thought that I preached "works" too much ; and he harassed me often with minor questions about justification, and faith, and righteousness. All this however was done in the kindest way imaginable, and with so earnest appearance of desiring my good and that of the church, that, although I thought he urged matters a little too much, yet my respect for him and love to him rather increased than diminished. No man had made me so much his confidant, and consequently no man was so much mine. What he proved to be finally, I will tell in the next chapter.



CHAPTER XII.

It was the universal custom of the people in the strait days of my youth, to keep the annual day of fasting literally, so far as to

abstain from a dinner. Nothing was eaten between breakfast and sun-down, except, perchance, a light luncheon, in the interval between the morning and evening services. It was not uncommon, however, to compensate for this extraordinary abstinence, by a supper as extraordinary ; and the meat and pudding which had been refused at noon, were devoured with a keener appetite in the evening. It was thought that the whole duty was performed, if the body were but mortified during day-light.

There were some in my parish who had departed from this custom. Mr Dunbar came to me in the week preceding fast, in the spring following my ordination, lamenting the decay of ancient manners, and begging me to urge, in my next sermon, the importance of a literal fast. He said much of the aid which devout men had derived from it in all ages, the profoundness it gave to their contemplations, and how it aided their prayers, and spiritual-mindedness ; he insisted that self-mortification was necessary to growth in grace, and that we were in danger, from employing it too little, of be-

coming entirely devoted to our animal and sensual nature.

I replied, that I had no doubt of all this, and that such had been, and would be, the efficacy of fasting, when it was voluntary. He that will, from religious motives, and the desire of holy meditation, deny his appetite, and spend his dining hour in devotion, will, unquestionably, find it profitable. But, if the fast be kept by compulsion, or from no better motive at bottom, than because it is the custom,—then it will probably be unprofitable, and will hinder, instead of promoting the devotion of the day. Besides, I added, temperance is a better aid to the powers of the mind than abstinence; and moreover, they who abstain at noon are very likely to revel at night, and in that case, whatever good may have been wrought, is more than lost. Mr Dunbar said he was aware that the day oftentimes ended in festivity and indulgence; but for his part, he abhorred it; in his own family, the supper was always frugal and religious; and he wished that I would attack this crying sin as well as the other.

“Or at least,” said he, coming at last to the point at which he had all along been aiming, “if you do not think right to preach, I wish you would speak a word of quiet advice to Mr Ellerton; for his example goes a great way; and it is a sinful thing that he should cook and eat on fast day just as on any other day. He makes no difference in the world. And what will become of religion and the church, if such men are to lead astray the simple people by their example? A good moral man, to be sure, and the world speaks well of him. But no man can say that he has ever experienced religion, and I am sure, for one, that he is an Arian at heart, if not a Deist. Indeed, I think he ought to be brought before the church, and not tolerated in quiet any longer. There is no knowing what mischief his example may do; and our fidelity to the Head of the Church requires that we cut him off.”

Mr Dunbar had more than once before spoken to the prejudice of Mr Ellerton, but never so explicitly as now. I did not altogether like the tone in which he continued

to enlarge, and at last replied, that even if I thought lukewarmness and suspected error proper subjects of church interference, yet I was too much a stranger in the place, to promote any such objects now. And as for the matter of fasting, I could not interfere at all ; for I intended myself to take my usual meals.

He left me evidently disappointed. On the day of the fast, there was observed in him a studied appearance of rigour and melancholy, and every external manifestation of suffering for sin, and absorption in divine meditation. He was of a "sad countenance and disfigured his face." In the evening—according, as it was ascertained, to his usual custom—a sumptuous supper was provided. He ate and drank to excess, and died the next day in consequence of the surfeit.

The shock my mind received on learning these circumstances, may be easily conceived ; much more so when the whole history and character of the man were revealed. He was discovered to have been altogether unprincipled in his transactions with men,

artful, and fraudulent, and sensual ; so that, in a word, for I cannot enlarge on so unpleasant a theme, his name became a by-word in the village, and never was spoken but with an accent of indignation. Yet so great had been the cunning of the man, that he had both escaped detection, and had passed, for the most part, though not altogether, without suspicion. There was but one person who thoroughly knew him, and that was Mr Ellerton. When I learned this, I perceived at once the cause of his ill will to that gentleman.

Mr Ellerton was one of the principal citizens of the place, and in most respects the very reverse of Mr Dunbar. He was, like all other respectable men of that day, a professor of religion. But no man could be less anxious about its form. He appeared with a dress and countenance and speech like those of other gentlemen. He seldom made religion the subject of conversation, and was generally supposed not to be fond of reading the scriptures, and not to have devotions in his family. He was suspected also of not being quite sound in the

faith. He was esteemed precisely what is called a good moral man. Very few would venture to call him a religious man, though he was punctual at church, and friendly to the ministry. But then he was proverbial for his truth, integrity, and kindness, and "every virtue under heaven." No man could be more universally respected and beloved.

I did not at this time know so much of him, for my ear had been poisoned by Dunbar. I had been led to look upon him coolly, and to avoid rather than seek his company. I had, consequently, in the seven months of my ministry, become hardly in any degree acquainted with him. The circumstances of Mr Dunbar's death led me to suspect the correctness of my impressions, and made me solicitous of greater intimacy with Mr Ellerton.

I soon discovered and admired the purity and firmness of his moral principle. But I wished to go further, and ascertain the state of his religious sentiments and affections. When we had become well acquainted, and were together by ourselves, I found

him ready and pleased to converse frankly. I immediately found that he was indeed an Arian ; and as I had always been taught, without knowing why, to look with horror on Arianism, as little better than infidelity, and to take it for granted that there could be no religion at heart without the worship of the trinity ; I thought that I saw at once how it happened that he wore no show of religion,—for he certainly could possess none ; that is, none of its fervour, life, and spirituality ; nothing of it but its decent, every day morality.

But a more intimate acquaintance taught me, that he was no stranger to the holiest and tenderest feelings of piety ; that he had experienced deeply the inward power of the gospel, and acknowledged it as a religion of the affections. So that, in a word, it has seldom fallen to my lot to know a soul of more elevated, expanded, and heavenly-minded religion, than dwelt within the frame of that unobtrusive man : giving direction and beauty to his whole life, but itself unseen and unheard in any separate or ostentatious display.

The observation of these two characters, furnished me with much matter for reflection. It made me ever after cautious, and distrustful of appearances, to a degree that was even painful. I learned to be jealous of lip religion, and cold toward those who were forward in profession. Nay, I was beset with an indefinable reserve, which sealed my lips, and checked the current of my feelings, whenever the subject of religion was touched by strangers, destroying much of the comfort and satisfaction I had hitherto enjoyed in religious conversation. How much have I suffered from this cause ! while nothing that I have gained has been able to compensate for the quietness and peace of the unsuspecting temper which I have lost. I think, however, that I have gained something by teaching myself and others to lay the stress upon the solid excellence of a good life. The longer I have lived, the more have I been persuaded that this is the great end of human endeavour, and the great touch-stone by which we are to judge one another. The heart *we* cannot see ; it must be left to the judgment of God. But where-

ever the life is uniformly and consistently good, I have learned to consider it as the part of charity to suppose that the heart also is right. I have been unable to join in the outcry against moral lives, as if they were, of course, signs of a worldly heart. I have thought it mischievous: I may say I have *found* it mischievous. Religion is helped by maintaining the dignity and importance of good works; yea, even though they stand by themselves. But it is injured if they be sneered at and defamed, because, however you may explain and qualify, many will understand you to say, that if there be faith and zeal, a good life is at best of only secondary importance. They will therefore make only secondary attempts to attain it. How many souls have been ruined in hypocrisy and spiritual pride, through this mistake!

CHAPTER XIII.

Mr Ellerton, of whom I spoke in the last chapter, was another added to the number of

the "excellent of the earth," whom it had been my privilege to know. Some of the peculiarities of his religious faith, and those in pretty important particulars, were widely different, I had reason to think, from those of any other good man I had met with. He did not believe in a tri-personal Deity; and this was a sort of unbelief, which I, like ten thousand others, looked upon with a vague sort of horror, I knew not whence nor why. For a long time, therefore, I could not believe that he was really so good a christian as he seemed to be; and when it was impossible to doubt this, my next conclusion very naturally was, that Trinitarianism, though the truth, yet could not be essential to the christian, for here was a christian without it. This discovery did a great deal to set me a thinking and to enlarge my views. But its best and happiest consequence was, to confirm me in my persuasion, that the great practical and vital principles of our religion are common to all believers. From this persuasion I have never varied. Experience has every year confirmed it; and it is still one of the most comforting

convictions of my heart. I look forward with the most delightful anticipations to the day, when I shall join in one communion the souls of those many good men, whom I have honoured and loved here, but from whose fellowship I have been shut out, by the miserable bars which prejudice and pride have put up amid the churches on earth.

But another important consequence was, that, not finding Arianism the monstrous thing I had imagined it, but, on the contrary, consistent with every christian grace, I was led to look upon it with complacency. I felt ashamed of the prejudice I had suffered myself to entertain. I felt mortified and humbled that I should have permitted myself to gather from the wholesale censures of books, and the sweeping sneers of conversation, an inimical impression against the holders of an opinion of which I knew nothing. This was the precise fact. I did know nothing, absolutely nothing, about them. I had examined other opinions, but not this. To this I had never turned my attention ; had never asked a question about

it, but had gone on in the way my father taught me, taking it for granted that I was right, and not so much as troubled with a suggestion that it was possible I might be wrong. I recollect perfectly well the first time the thought occurred to me. It was when I had become well acquainted with Mr Ellerton's character, and had been striving in vain to reconcile it with his anti-christian creed. The question seemed to be asked me, how do you know it *is* anti-christian? I felt at once that I did not know, for I never had inquired. I cannot describe the sensation which passed over me, as this thought flashed through my mind. A cold thrill went through my frame, a tumult of thoughts crowded and agitated my mind. I soon felt that it was my duty to inquire, and know *that* whereof I would affirm; and in great anxiety of mind, and earnest supplication for heavenly guidance, I at once entered upon the investigation.

The first discovery I made, was one, which has been made by multitudes besides, but which filled me with inexpressible surprise. It was, that I was not, and never

had been a trinitarian. When I came to see the definitions and explanations of the doctrine, and compared them with the state of my own mind, I found that I had used its language, but had never adopted its meaning. I had fallen into its use, just as I had fallen into the common language of men about the rising and setting of the sun—not because I believed what the words literally imply, but because it was the phraseology in common use where I lived. Trinitarian doxologies I had employed,—because I had always heard them from childhood ; but I found that I had never affixed to them trinitarian notions. I found that I never had worshipped any being, but the Father of Jesus Christ, and that all my religious feelings were grounded on the supposition of his single divinity.

So then, I thought to myself, I have been guilty of contemning and denouncing a sentiment, which all the time I ignorantly held ; and of thoughtlessly using language which implied a faith different from my actual opinion. This discovery humbled me to the dust. I could scarcely bear the burden

of shame and reproach which my conscience heaped upon me. I have since found that this thoughtlessness is by no means uncommon. Inexcusable as it is, yet many have I known in precisely the same situation with myself. Indeed I have reason to believe that the large majority of those educated in the orthodox faith, are no more truly orthodox than I was, though they imagine themselves to be so; and I have accordingly found that when they allow themselves to look fairly into the matter, they discover themselves to have been unitarians all their lives without knowing it.

Had I been acquainted with this fact at the time of which I speak, it would have saved me much unhappiness. As it was, I had a long and painful labour to go through, in ascertaining whether my language or my opinions were the truth of revelation on this subject. The one or the other must necessarily be rejected as wrong. For two years I pursued the inquiry with all the anxiety and impartiality of a conscientious mind. It would take too much room to detail the progress of my experience at this time.

Suffice it to say, that I obtained complete satisfaction at last, and have been ever since happy in the simplicity and consistency of my Unitarian belief. I have known many pass through the same process, with an equally happy result ; and many, I may add, with a result still more happy, because their minds were relieved by it from the distressing burden of other ungenerous doctrines, which had preyed upon their spirits and disquieted their lives, but from whose bondage I had been redeemed some time earlier. I cannot but remark here, how much is effected by the light of a good conversation. I was set on thinking and won to the knowledge of the truth, by observing one man's christian deportment. It would be well if christians were generally aware that they can produce no so powerful argument in their favour, as a holy life. Thousands will understand it and be convinced by it, whom no reasoning, though it were demonstrative, would at all affect. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

CHAPTER XIV.

IT was in the summer of ———, that Mr Garstone took up his residence in our village. It occasioned no little surprise and speculation in that retired place, to find a stranger of education and property, selecting it for his abode. He built a commodious but small house upon a little hillock by the side of a beautiful pond, which lay about a mile from the meeting-house. I never had seen him, but as soon as he had taken possession of his place, I felt it my duty to call and bid him welcome.

The room into which I entered, impressed me at once with respect for the owner of the mansion, and as I cast my eyes round on its neat and elegant comforts, I thought I saw indications of taste and refinement beyond any thing to which I had been accustomed. A piano forte, a rarer luxury then than now, stood open on one side, and opposite to it a book case, well and handsomely filled. I could give but a hasty look when Mr Garstone entered. He was ap-

parently about fifty years of age, thin and pale, with a settled melancholy upon his countenance, which sometimes approximated to sternness; and a manner reserved and cold. His appearance rather repressed the warmth with which I was disposed to greet him; and after several ineffectual attempts to throw off the restraint his manner imposed, I left him, disappointed and sad.

I looked in vain for his entrance to the meeting house on Sunday, though his two daughters were there. They were dressed in deep mourning; and this I thought accounted for their father's manners, though he had made no allusion to any affliction. I soon visited him again, and gradually we became a little acquainted. His wife, I found, had died about ten months previous; he had lost his only son just before, and had now bid farewell to the world, intending to spend the remainder of life with his daughters in retirement. He attended to their education, he studied and read, and amused himself with the cultivation of his lands. He had an extensive acquaintance with

books and subjects, and oftentimes would delight me with his animated and intelligent conversation. I derived much instruction from his society, and he seemed to take pleasure in mine. But all attempts to introduce religious conversation he uniformly set aside ; and never attended public worship. This made me uneasy ; and I longed to know why it was, that a man who was evidently unhappy, was yet willing to be a voluntary stranger to the consolations of religion.

It was not so with his daughters. They were uninstructed in religion, but they took an interest in it. Indeed, as far as they had been taught, they felt its great truths deeply, and exercised a profound piety. They were glad to converse, when it happened—which was very seldom—that their father was not present ; and I often thought that their countenances expressed sorrow, that the subject must be dropped on his entrance. I one day expressed my surprise to them, that their father should habitually absent himself from public worship. They replied that it had been so ever since their memory ;

and that they believed he did it from principle.

“Has he no sense of its importance and value,” said I; “does he feel nothing, think nothing, of the great truths of religion?”

“Alas,” replied the eldest, whose name was Charlotte, “I fear he thinks but too much, and feels too much. I have reason to suppose, although he never speaks of it, that it is this which lies at the bottom of his unhappiness, and that if this burden could be removed, he would be a cheerful and happy man.”

I looked at her for explanation. “Unreflecting men,” said she, “may be happy without religious faith; for their habitual thoughtlessness excludes the subject from their minds. But a man who is in habits of reflection, and who cannot keep from his mind the thoughts of the Author of his being, and the great concerns of futurity, must be often wretched without a settled faith.”

“It is true, then,” said I, “what I have suspected, that your father is not a believer in the Christian religion?”

“It is,” she replied; “and to you who

know him, this will account for all his appearance and habits. For how can such a man, who longs and pants for the refuge of its truths, be happy without them? He may have every thing else; but the want of these will leave an aching void, which nothing else can fill. O what a blessed day it would be to us all, which should make him a believer! He has every thing else to render himself and us happy; but for want of this, there is a bitter taste to every enjoyment, and discontent in every scene."

"Is he not aware of the cause of his dissatisfaction?" I asked.

"He is," replied Charlotte, "and yet he is not. That is to say, he acknowledges the power of the Christian faith in others, and I believe is truly happy that we possess it. But he will not allow that it would do any thing for himself. He insists that in his literary and philosophical pursuits, he has all the satisfaction that the human mind can attain, and that nothing could add to his happiness. But it is very seldom he speaks on the subject. Indeed he is so strongly prejudiced that we avoid any allusion to

it altogether. For I think he is the more violently positive from the very feeling he has, that there is an essential thing wanting. He tries in this way to stifle his feelings, and to convince himself that he wants nothing."

"I have seen something like this," said I, "in other cases; but I should not suspect it in your father. How is it that he is thus prejudiced?"

"It is partly," she answered, "his misfortune, and partly his fault: His misfortune, because in early life he was thrown into the midst of fanaticism and bigotry, which disgusted him, and rendered the whole system incredible to him: His fault, because he suffered prejudice to sway him, and did not deliberately institute an inquiry which should separate the false from the true, and show him that the system itself may be true and excellent, notwithstanding the follies of its friends."

"Can you state to me at length," said I, "the circumstances under which these indelible impressions were made?"

Before Charlotte could more than commence a reply to this question, Mr Garstone

came in, and conversation took a different turn. I returned home, deeply interested in what I had heard, and anxious to hear more.



CHAPTER XV.

What I had now heard interested me too much to suffer me to rest until I had learned more. The history of Mr Garstone I found to be this:—He was the son of parents, whose religion partook of the character of austerity and superstition. He was educated in the most rigid restraint, and imbued diligently with the dogmas of the Assembly's Catechism. When he had grown to years of understanding, being of a strong mind and peculiarly susceptible feelings, his reflections on the subject of religion became earnest in the extreme, and occupied him day and night. A fear of God, rather dreadful than pleasant, as he expressed it, had always oppressed him, and it now made him miserable. The doctrines which he had learned in childhood, he now began to

understand and reason upon, and apply to himself. He saw that if they were true, he was condemned by his birth to an eternal curse, which only the re-creating grace of God could remove. And this grace was appointed to visit only a chosen few. Was *he* one of these chosen? Should he ever taste this grace? Or was he to be abandoned by the discriminating spirit of God to his horrible destiny?

Beneath the agony of heart which this personal application of his creed produced, he struggled long and wretchedly. His misery, he told me, was indescribable. His life for months was a burden of terror and fear. Every thing lost its relish in the desperate attempt to gain satisfaction and hope from what appeared to him the sentence of despair—a sentence, which he was sometimes tempted to pronounce inconsistent with every attribute of justice and goodness. But this temptation he was taught to reject as blasphemous, and a foul instigation of the devil. He strove to smother every feeling of this nature, and in spite of the clear demonstration, which the more he reflected

the more strongly was forced upon him, he compelled himself to believe, that all this might be so, and God still be just. In this tumult of contradictions, in this struggle of his mind to be reconciled to what he felt to be dreadful, and tried in vain to see to be right, two years of misery past away, and health and cheerfulness passed away with them. Reading, reflection, tears, prayers, were all in vain. The counsel of friends was also vain; for his state of mind was a cause of congratulation to them, being, as they supposed, the struggle of the natural man in the throes of the new birth, from which he would come forth regenerate and rejoicing. They rather increased than allayed his perplexity. They rebuked his attempts to reason on the subject, and told him it was vain to hope for satisfaction, except only in that prostrate faith, which God would give if he pleased, and when he pleased. They bade him therefore wait, and not be guilty of the blasphemy of trying God's ways by the rules of human reason.

He did wait, but to no purpose. He humbled himself, and strove to quell what

was called his pride, and to believe the consistency of what appeared to him contradictory, and made it the burden of his prayer, that he might only find peace, and he would willingly sacrifice every other thing. It was all in vain. No peace came. But, not to prolong the story, the powers of his mind at last triumphed. He found it impossible, after every effort, to attribute to the government of God, what he had been taught to attribute to it. He gradually came to the determination that such a system could not be true, and he rejected it as contradicting almost every high and holy truth, which nature and common sense teach of the great Creator.

I could not help being deeply interested in this history. Unhappy man, thought I, thus driven away from the light and comforts of God's word! How different might have been the result, if he had been blessed with early opportunities like mine! He would have found help in his difficulties, as I did; he would have learned, that the gospel of God's love is not implicated with any of those dogmas, "*at which reason*

stands aghast and faith herself is half confounded ;" and he might have received it in its native beauty and uncorrupted lustre,

" Majestic in its own simplicity,"

the ornament, support, guide, and joy of his soul, conducting him tranquilly through life, to an everlasting hope. But of all this he had been deprived. He had come to reject the gospel, from never knowing truly its real character. He had thrown away its peace, from having a counterfeit offered in its stead.

But though he had rid himself of this cause of trouble he was far from tranquility. His religious propensities were strong, and his education had been such as to associate ideas of the highest importance with the subject. His reverence for God was deep and habitual, his belief in a future state fixed, and his conviction that God had revealed himself to the world was too deep rooted to be easily removed. There was a great deal, too, sublime and beautiful and delightful in the history, character, and teaching of Jesus, which he could not reconcile with his imposture, any more than he could reconcile the doctrines he had

been taught with his truth. Here, then, was another distressing embarrassment. At length he strove to escape from it by avoiding the subject altogether. He put away his Bible, he neglected public worship, he involved himself in other studies and active pursuits, and tried to forget all he had ever known or thought about revealed religion.

But he could not succeed. It came to his thoughts in spite of him, and never suffered him to be at rest. His mind often misgave him; he became anxious, melancholy, fitful, unsettled; an unbeliever, yet longing to believe; striving to think himself wiser and happier than others, yet secretly hoping he should one day be like them; with a fixed abhorrence of what had been urged on him as the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, yet conscious that human wisdom could have no light, and human weakness no hope, except from the declared mercy of heaven.

Such was Mr Garstone when I knew him; and I may truly say, that I never have seen the man more deserving of compassion; nor can I imagine a more sad picture of the

deplorable effects of unbelief. I bent my knee in devout gratitude for the felicity I enjoyed in the glorious faith and hope of Christ, and breathed an earnest prayer that I might be enabled to heal the errors and comfort the spirit of this unhappy and mistaken man.

CHAPTER XVI.

My first object was to gain the confidence of Mr Garstone ; for it was above all important, that he should not be prejudiced against the person who would endeavour to remove his prejudice against the Christian revelation. In this attempt I had reason to think that I did not fail ; and having secured his friendship, I laid in wait for opportunity to use it.

I was not long in finding one. It was after the death of Mr Ellerton, his friend and my friend. I spoke of his character, and of the loss we sustained in his removal, with the feelings of a friend, and of his prospect in a better world, with the hope

of a christian. I dwelt at some length on the assurance of our immortality, derived from the instructions and resurrection of Christ, and, with all the emphasis I could command, pictured the blessedness of a believer's hope. I could perceive that Mr Garstone was moved. I had touched a string which vibrated powerfully, to every word I uttered.

"These are delightful thoughts," he said, after a pause; "but——" He hesitated and stopped.

I took the word from his mouth. "But there is no assurance of this truth, except from the voice of revelation. All is doubt except from the instructions of Jesus Christ. His resurrection makes all clear."

"Mr Anderson," said my friend, "my respect for you and for the opinions of those with whom I live, has always prevented me from obtruding my own sentiments on subjects of this nature. You cannot, however, be ignorant of my mind, and it were better, perhaps, that we should be silent where we cannot agree."

I felt that this was the decisive moment;

and with a violent effort said the first thing that occurred to me, lest I should be unable to say any thing. "I know," said I, "that you have doubts as to the christian revelation ; but I hope they do not extend to the immortality of the soul. And I see not why we should not converse on the subject. I do long to know on what your doubts are grounded."

"I do believe in the immortality of the soul," he replied ; "and for this very reason I cannot believe in the christian religion. For how can I suppose that immortal beings are formed by their Creator in a bondage so degrading and so hopeless, as your system teaches—from which only a small proportion of them can ever be rescued, and they only by the sufferings and death of the Creator himself in human form ? How can I imagine him to be divinely commissioned, who proclaims to me such horrors—and yet calls them glad tidings and a message of peace, though only calculated to harass and torment the soul, as they once did mine ? It is true he teaches the doctrine of a future life ; but how can I believe

that life suspended on so unequal conditions ?”

He spoke with a deep and convulsive emphasis, that showed how strongly he felt. I asked him if he saw no evidence in favour of Christ’s pretensions ?

He answered, that all the evidence in the world would not be sufficient to prove what all nature and reason contradict. “ Who has tried to believe more than I ?” he continued. “ Who has more earnestly longed to believe ? and who has been more wretched for want of believing ? Yet I might as well have tried to persuade myself that I could walk upon a sun-beam. But it is all past; let us say no more about it. It is a subject on which I have not talked nor read for years. I cannot bear it.”

But now that the ice was broken and the first feeling over, I found him ready and disposed to converse, for he saw that he might entirely trust himself with me. I soon drew from him the acknowledgment, that there was much evidence in favour of the christian system, too strong to be satisfactorily set aside ; that the character of

Jesus was inconsistent with imposture, "and not less so," he added, "with the doctrines he taught ;" and that a revelation was in itself neither an incredible nor an undesirable thing.

"Then it appears," I remarked, "that what decides you against it is the character of the religion itself?"

"Yes, together with its consequences—the divisions and miseries of its followers."

"How long since you made up your mind in this way?" I inquired.

"More than twenty years," was the answer.

"And during this period you have not pursued the investigation at all?"

No—he had avoided the subject as much as possible—had read no books—held no conversation—not once opened the Bible.

I asked him, if he thought it safe to put this confidence in the decision of his youthful judgment, and to retain this obstinate prejudice on so momentous a subject. I reminded him that Christians differ in understanding their religion; and how could he tell that another interpretation of it would not solve all his difficulties?

He said, that in his view this very circumstance destroyed all its claims to the certainty of a divine origin ; for if God should teach men, he would do it clearly, and leave no room to doubt his meaning.

I gave the obvious and satisfactory solution of this difficulty, drawn from the moral nature and probationary state of man; and then went on with the topic I had commenced. I endeavoured to show him, that the objections he felt to the christian system were, in fact, objections only to a certain mode of interpreting that system ; and that therefore he had no right to reject it, unless he had satisfied himself from faithful inquiry, that this was the only true interpretation. “For myself,” said I, “I freely declare that I think it a very erroneous interpretation. I have hardly less dislike to it, than you have yourself. I think it an incredible system. But I still receive the instructions of Jesus with the greatest delight and comfort. You have shut yourself out from these, by taking the representations of your catechism for a true picture of the Bible, and never doing yourself the justice to as-

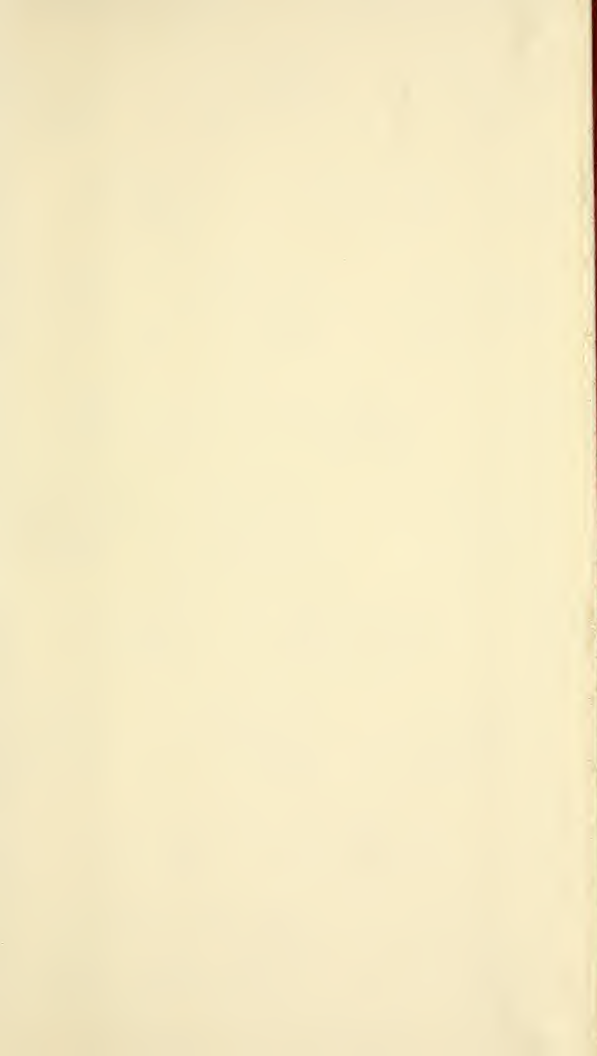
certain whether they were so or not." I went on to expostulate on the unreasonableness of this conduct; I illustrated at large my own views of the christian faith; I explained to him their consistency with the noblest reason and the best affections, with all we delight to think concerning God, and all we ought to do as moral agents; and I entreated him by all that is dear and sacred, to open his mind once more to inquiry, to read the scriptures again, and try to welcome Jesus as the way, the truth and the life.

I was very earnest, and I did not speak in vain. Mr Garstone once more opened the book, which he had thrown by so long, and read it with the sober judgment of mature life; not interpreting it, as before, by the standard of Westminster, but by the light of a careful and sound comparison of itself with itself. Long and zealously he studied. Other matters were neglected, other studies put aside. Light on this great question he longed for, and he sought after it far and near. He did not pause till his mind settled in a firm conviction of the truth; and with de-

vout and happy faith he could exclaim, *I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* And he was able afterward, to add, *Though I die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.*

From this time he was an altered man. The change cannot be described, but it was evident in every habit of his life and every feature of his face. His mind was at peace. He was happy. Often has he described to me the relief which he felt, as if a heavy burden were removed from his soul; and instead of leaving the world a distressed and obstinate unbeliever, he died tranquilly, triumphant in faith, rejoicing in hope.

I have met with other instances not unlike this; and I find it refreshing to my soul, as the shadows of death approach, to reflect that the faith which supports me, I have known to vanquish confirmed infidelity, and bring home to the Saviour those who had been wanderers from his peace. So let it support me in that hour!



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